IN THE CLAIMS:

Please add new Claims 11 to 15 and amend the claims as shown below. The claims, as currently pending in the application, read as follow.

1. (Currently Amended) A serial communication apparatus for sending and receiving serial data through a data signal line[[s]], comprising:

buffer means ~~for~~ capable of releasing the data signal[[s]] line; and

~~level~~ control means for ~~releasing signal lines at a given timing~~ controlling said buffer means to release the data signal line after the data signal line is temporarily retained at a second level ~~retains data signals,~~ if ~~the~~ a control signal ~~that instructs the~~ for instructing a release of the data signal line ~~to the buffer means~~ is input~~ted,~~ when the data signal line ~~indicates the~~ is at a first level ~~by the buffer means~~.

2. (Currently Amended) A serial communication apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the ~~serial communication apparatus uses~~ buffer means is a three-state buffer ~~as the buffer means, the level control means retains the second level by the three-state buffer, and the three-state buffer is set up in~~ for placing the data signal line in one of a high-output impedance ~~condition at a given timing after input of control signal~~ level in the release state, the first level and the second level.

3. (Currently Amended) A serial communication apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising means for stopping ~~the~~ an operation of the ~~level~~ control means.

4. (Currently Amended) A serial communication apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising means for ~~canceling~~ stopping an operation of the control means when a communication trouble occurs, and the operation ~~stop~~ of the ~~level~~ control means~~;~~ ~~on condition that at least one time of~~ is restarted when a normal communication is made after ~~communication trouble if~~ communication trouble ~~occurred~~ occurs.

5. (Currently Amended) A serial communication apparatus according to claim 1, ~~further comprising~~ wherein said control means ~~for releasing~~ controls the buffer means to release the data signal line if the data signal line ~~indicates~~ is at the first level when sending or receiving has ended.

6. (Currently Amended) A serial communication method of sending and receiving serial data through a data signal line[[s]], comprising:

a first step of temporarily retaining the data signal[[s]] line at a second level, if a control signal ~~that instructs the~~ for instructing a release of the data signal line ~~to a buffer means~~ is inputted, when the data signal line ~~indicates~~ is at a first level ~~by the buffer means that has also the function of releasing data signals~~; and

a second step of releasing the data signal[[s]] line ~~at a given timing~~ after retaining the ~~second level retains~~ data signal[[s]] line at the second level in the first step.

7. (Currently Amended) A serial communication method according to claim 6, wherein the serial communication method uses a three-state buffer ~~as the buffer means, and the first step retains the second level by the three-state buffer, and in the second step, the three-state buffer is set up in~~ for placing the data signal line in one of a

high-output impedance ~~condition at a given timing after input of control signal~~ level in the release state, the first level and the second level.

8. (Currently Amended) A serial communication method according to claim 6, further comprising a step of inhibiting ~~the processing by the control step~~ the release of the data signal line.

9. (Currently Amended) A serial communication method according to claim 6, further comprising a step of ~~canceling the processing inhibition of the control step, on condition that at least one time of~~ inhibiting the release of the data signal line when a communication trouble occurs, and a step of allowing the release of the data signal line when a normal communication is made after the communication trouble ~~if communication trouble occurred~~ occurs.

10. (Currently Amended) A serial communication method according to claim 6, further comprising a step of releasing the data signal line if the data signal line ~~indicates~~ is at the first level when sending or receiving has ended.

11. (New) A serial communication apparatus for sending and receiving serial data through a data signal line, comprising:

a buffer capable of releasing the data signal line; and

a controller which controls said buffer to release the data signal line after the data signal line is temporarily retained at a second level, if a control signal for

instructing a release of the data signal line is input when the data signal line is at a first level.

12. (New) A serial communication apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the buffer is a three-state buffer which places the data signal line in one of a high-output impedance level in the release state, the first level and the second level.

13. (New) A serial communication apparatus according to claim 11, further comprising a circuit which stops an operation of said controller.

14. (New) A serial communication apparatus according to claim 11, further comprising a circuit which stops an operation of the controller when a communication trouble occurs, and restarts the operation of the controller when a normal communication is made after the communication trouble occurs.

15. (New) A serial communication apparatus according to claim 11, wherein said controller controls said buffer to release the data signal line, if the data signal line is at the first level when sending or receiving has ended.